

CLAIMS

1. A method for packaging comprising the steps of:
 - (i) continuously feeding a packaging material as tubing from a supply;
 - (ii) slitting and unfolding said tubing to form a flat web of said packaging
5 material;
 - (iii) forming said flat web of packaging material around a fed product and longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and
 - (iv) cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the
product.
- 10 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (iv) the packaging material is cut and sealed at one end of the product and the packaged product is subsequently vacuum sealed.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the tubing has a double web width of up to
15 about 550 mm.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein during feeding the tubing is tracked to ensure that in step (ii) it is substantially centrally slit along its length.
- 20 5. A method according to claim 1, wherein prior to or during the longitudinal sealing of the packaging material in step (iii), the packaging material is trimmed along its slit edges formed in step (ii) to remove excess packaging material therefrom.
6. A method according to claim 1, wherein step (iv) is carried out by impulse sealing the
25 packaging material at the end or ends of the product.
7. A packaging apparatus comprising:
 - means for receiving packaging material continuously fed as tubing from a supply, and slitting and unfolding the tubing to form a flat web of the packaging material;
 - 30 calendering means for receiving the flat web and tensioning the flat web;

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forming means for receiving the tensioned flat web and forming the flat web around a fed product;

sealing means for longitudinally sealing the packaging material formed around the product; and

5 end sealing means for cutting and sealing the packaging material at one or both ends of the product.

8. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the calendering means comprises a pair of spaced rollers which are adapted to ensure that the flat web is fed to the forming means
10 at a consistent tension and angle.

9. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the forming means comprises a forming shoe which forms the flat web into a tubular shape around the fed product.

15 10. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the end sealing means comprising a hot or cold sealing system.

11. A packaging apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the end sealing means comprises an impulse sealing device which includes at least two complimentary jaw members which clamp
20 the packaging material to form a transverse cut in the packaging material, and which form a seal on one or both sides of the formed transverse cut.

12. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising means for trimming excess packaging material from the flat web of packaging material.

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13. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising means to facilitate centre tracking of the tubing to ensure that it is slit centrally along its length by the slitting and unfolding means.

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14. A packaging apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the means to facilitate centre tracking of the tubing includes one or more sensors.
15. A packaging apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising sensing means for auto-
5 positioning of a product for end sealing.